

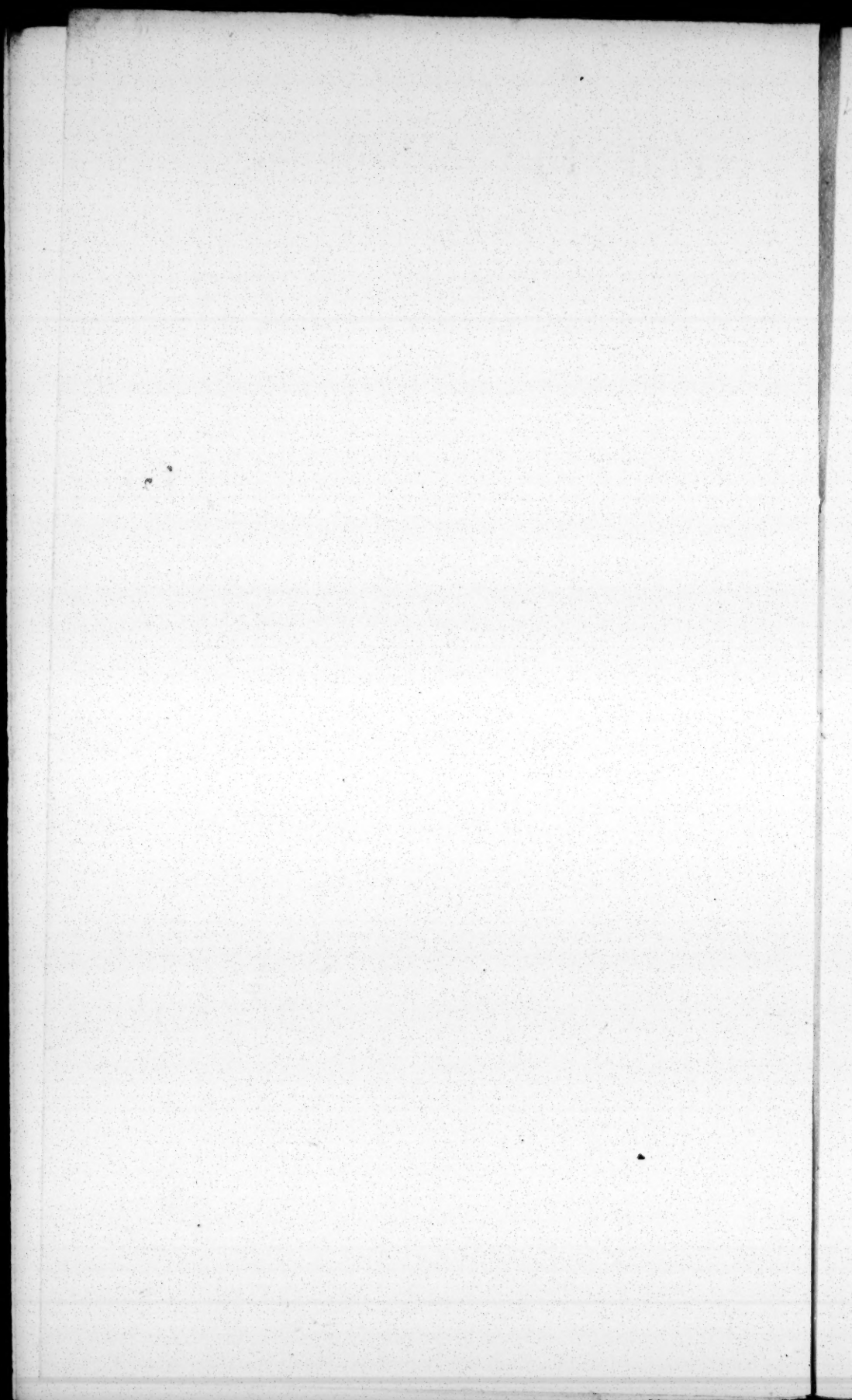
A  
FRIENDLY ADDRESS,  
TO THE  
*METHODISTS,*

BY  
ROBERT HALL.

*not the*  
*Repl'*  
*they mean joint Ed. of Kebley*  
“ For my own part, I have no doubt but the leading men  
“ among the Methodists, were influenced originally by none  
“ but the best of all motives, a general concern for the souls of  
“ men. Nothing else I think, can account for their conduct,  
“ as they were then circumstanced — But finding themselves by  
“ degrees at the head of a large body of people, and in the pos-  
“ session of considerable power, and influence, they must not  
“ have been MEN, if they had not felt the love of power gratifi-  
“ ed in such a situation : and they must have been MORE THAN  
“ MEN, if their subsequent conduct had not been more, or less  
“ influenced by it,

DR. PRIESTLEY'S *Letters.*

NOTTINGHAM:  
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429/12  
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## FRIENDLY ADDRESS, &c.

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*My truly respected Brethren,*

AS the attention of our religious Societies, has been of late directed to the several parts of our Church government, and as these are now become the subjects of your discussion and consideration; I wish to address you on them, and to set before you in as clear a point of light, and at the same time as concisely as possible, those particular points in dispute, that are worthy of your attention. When too much has been said, on any subject, the mind becomes bewildered, and we sometimes find ourselves inclined to reject the whole, rather than enter into that reflection, and discrimination, that is necessary to the obtaining a full understanding of it. To me the essential parts of the dispute, seem capable of being compressed into a very small compass, and in all matters of this kind, the more we can reduce them the better. I consider that I am addressing myself to a people, that from their necessary and honest engagements in life, cannot give much of their time, to the investigating perplexed and abstruse subjects. I shall therefore think myself happy, if I can give you any assistance, and it is my sincere wish, that you would take these matters, that I shall endeavour to state to you, into serious consideration, as you ought to do all those, in which you are so deeply concerned. I think that all the grievances, of which we so justly complain, may be considered as contained in, or, the consequence of the three following particulars.

A 2

First,

First, The conference has seized the whole power, of choosing their own body, and has totally rejected, in most cases, the voice of the people, in the choice of ~~the~~ persons for the important office of ~~the~~ Ministry.

Secondly, They make all laws for themselves, and for the people without ever consulting them.

Thirdly. They claim the privilege of directing all, or nearly all money matters. I will give you my sentiments on each of these particulars.

That any body of men, that take upon themselves, the important business of legislating; or, making laws for others, should chuse the members that constitute their own body, is contrary to justice and equity, a violation of one of those first principles, that we should ever hold sacred, and an obvious encroachment on the liberties of mankind. And you know my friends, this takes from you, all possibility of checking the growth of any evil, that may arise among the preachers; for however degenerate the conference, may in time become (were we to suppose it, only for the purpose of stating a possible case,) on its *present plan*, it is totally out of your power to reform it. As to the conference itself, no person that properly considers the subject, can be so weak and ignorant, as to suppose, that it will ever knowingly elect into itself, such members as ~~will~~ promote its reformation. No persons show a greater jealousy, than the preachers now do of each other, and though I will not go so far, as to say their original views in the choice of their brethren, is become totally extinct; yet I will affirm it is in part so. Did they act with a perfectly upright

*Oh Mr Bob, if you are not "weak" you are "ignorant," for a mere novice in the conference could tell you, that the members of the conference are elected according to their numbers. The work is not done yet. 11111*



upright intention, when a candidate for the Ministry was proposed, they would attend to no other qualification, but that which is immediately connected with his sacred office. But I am sorry to say, that it can now no longer be concealed, that with *too many* these are but secondary considerations, and the following are their leading motives, in the reception or rejection of those that become candidates for the Ministry.

Will he that now offers himself as a preacher, be duly submissive to me, his assistant, and my brethren? Will our abilities be eclipsed by his? Will the people *run after him* more than us? Will he submit to be an underling for a number of years? Or will he soon take upon himself more importance, than we that have travelled many years? It is necessary here to observe the assembled conference, know but little of the Persons proposed to travel; that important enquiry, is submitted to a few individual Preachers, at the district meeting, and their judgments are frequently biased as above, in this important transaction. It is no breach of charity to affirm that these are the motives that sway too many, and cause them to prefer weak and ignorant men, to those that have better abilities. I am quite willing to admit my friends, that there are many exceptions to these complaints, but still they are so general, as to become truly alarming. You that have filled the offices of Stewards and Leaders for several years, from your knowledge of our affairs, are the persons generally speaking, than can decide, and to you I appeal for the truth of my assertions. If this statement be just, you will, without hesitation allow, that nothing but the admission of the people, into a due share of that power

which

A bold apostolic friend that  
 will give a little oil for a broken head!

which is their right, can save the conference from destruction. When persons have been long accustomed to view objects, in a certain point of light, and have not been in the habit of reasoning on them, they are apt to become immoveable to the operation of reason and reflection. However this may have been the case with any of you, I hope my dear friends you will now open your eyes; use but the understanding the almighty hath favoured you with, and you will be able to discern, that if we have not very soon an alteration, a chain of the most disastrous consequences, must immediately follow.

The second grievance is, the conference assumes the privilege of making all laws for itself and us. This indeed hangs on the first that I have mentioned. The power of creating or electing themselves, is the foundation of all our evils, as you will be convinced on proper consideration. But let us now speak of the making our laws only. What an insult it is to reason, and common sense, that the conference should arrogate to itself, the entire disposal of our dearest privileges; as if it had monopolized all the wisdom in the world, that it was all centered in a focus in their *secret assemblies*; bound there by the cord of the most *sacred oaths*, and only to be retailed to mankind at their wills, and as future exigencies may require. Certainly they consider themselves as of a superior order of beings, and forget they ever belonged to the people: so apt are mankind on the slightest elevation, to forget the rock out of which they were hewn, or the pit whence they originally proceeded. You my friends cannot but be  
forcibly

forcibly struck with the uncommon opinion, the conference maintains of its own superior abilities, and the mean one it has of yours. You certainly cannot forbear applying the irony of Job to his friends, "no doubt but they are the people, and wisdom will die with them." But were we to admit that the laws of the conference, were found in the greatest wisdom, and were the sum of all that is excellent in human government, as they are made without your knowledge or consent, you would scarcely relish them. If a person were to compel you to accept of an acknowledged good, and by this also taught you that he could force on you a serious evil, you could not thank him; for the same reason if you receive from the conference, even the best and most innocent of its mandates, you are vexed by the tacit intimations that these must convey, of the abject slavery to which you are reduced.

With regard to the third cause of our complaint, the interference of conference in temporal affairs. This includes their accounts and the appointment of stewards throughout these kingdoms. I will frankly give it as my opinion, at least as it respects several members of the conference, that they have from a long train of strange policy, and unnecessary caution, against the claims of the people, brought themselves into difficulties, that they would be very glad to get out of.—But this they cannot now effect, without exposing themselves, and shewing the weakness and impolicy of their former proceedings. You know it requires more grace to acknowledge an error, than it would have done at first to have avoided it. One single deviation from the path of truth, draws after it a series of inconveniences and  
lays



lays us under the temptation to proceed with evasions. So that in general it is easier to retain our integrity, than to recover it if ever we have swerved from it.— The conference would be entitled to all our compassion and forbearance, if they evinced but the smallest inclination, to attend to the voice of prudence, and fix themselves on the solid basis of justice and equity. To upbraid or reproach any one for his faults, when in the very act of repentance would be a piece of cruelty, that you my pious friends would never use. But it is to be feared there is no great danger of your falling into this error, for the conference have hitherto shewn, so determined an adherence to their present system, that all you can say will probably fall short, of awakening in them a due sense of those obligations they are under, to restore those privileges they have unjustly deprived you of.

But to enter particularly into the consideration of the accounts of conference. You will lament that they should be brought as a reproach against those persons, of whom you wish to think so honourably. As to the accounts themselves they are stated in so slovenly a manner, as to be a disgrace to the meanest tradesman among you. In this I appeal to all persons conversant with accounts. Whether this is by design or not. I will not determine. The Kingswood affairs, are made yearly to *meet and tie* as some will call it, and therefore there is no annual balance, and to this as far as it goes, there appears no other objection, but the clumsiness of the manner; but you will observe you have no particulars of expenditure, which appear to me to have been absolutely



lutely necessary. My friends look at the Quaker's yearly account of their school at Ackworth, of three times the magnitude of yours, and you will be immediately struck with the difference. You have also had a statement of the preachers' fund every year, but in this no annual balance is brought forward, and the general balance of this fund no where appears, so that whether it be one or ten thousand pounds is entirely kept from you. With regard to the book business they give you no account, they claim the same privilege that the proprietors of other businesses do, of being the sole managers in their own affairs.—You my friends will judge of the propriety, or impropriety of their reasoning in this case; I think it not at all parallel, I suppose they are as accountable to the people for this as for their other affairs, for this is always supposed to be an institution, the revenue of which is for charitable and benevolent purposes, and is so completely united with your other contributions, as to make them properly accountable for the whole.

The yearly collection in 1791 you will find equilibrated, as the Kingwood collection has always been. But in the succeeding years there are balances of deficiency, of very different amount as you will see by my statement; and in 1795 you will be surprized to find it to be 2143 10 4½. This must appear to you very extraordinary and unsatisfactory; all these ballances are extremely unaccountable, and together with the annual balances of the preachers' fund, appear to be carried to some other book, which probably like the ancient book of Jasher is not to be found.

I have

I have placed the accounts exactly as given in the minutes (except an error in 1796) for the conveniency of your perusal ;

PREACHERS FUND						<i>Kingswood</i> Collection,		
	<i>Received,</i>			<i>Paid,</i>				
1791	730	10	8	495	14	0	1035	11 9
1792	714	17	3	667	6	0	1229	5 9
1793	1084	13	10	802	7	0	1177	16 5
1794	1175	11	2	718	0	0	1284	18 1
1795	1288	16	6	866	7	0	1350	14 6
1796	1249	17	3	922	6	0	1434	14 6
Balance	-	-	-	1772	6	8		
6244 6 8			6244 6 8					

#### YEARLY COLLECTION.

	<i>Received,</i>			<i>Paid,</i>		
1791	1338	8	1	1338	8	1
1792	1443	16	2	1912	1	4
1793	1365	14	7	1785	14	0
1794	1387	15	9	1901	13	4
1795	1431	15	3	3575	5	7½
1796	1484	2	3	3234	17	8
Balance	5296	7	11½			
13748 0 0½			13748 0 0½			

I suppose the annual profits of the Book business to be 2,000l. persons in that trade say it is much under-rated at that sum. It appears therefore, that the balances of the Preachers fund in the six years, give the sum of 1772l. 6s. 8d. and the Book business in the same time would give 12,000l. making in all 13772l. 6s. 8d. from from

from which, if we deduct the deficiency of the yearly collection, which is 5296l. 7s. 11½d. there then remains a balance of 8475l. 18s. 8½d.

Now my generous friends, I hope you will not draw any unfair, or unkind conclusion from this statement. You will observe I do not pretend to assert, the amount of the property of the conference. I simply reduce for your use, the accounts they have given, and I give it as my opinion, that though we cannot agree with the reports of 1795, that the conference was verging towards insolvency, yet when compared with the magnitude of our affairs, the sum is small indeed, and no reflections ought to be cast on the conference on that account. If our affairs were properly, and openly conducted, if the general fund, were under proper regulations, so as not to be secreted in the hands of a few, and brought to operate against your liberties, by being used for disgraceful litigations, and a variety of secret services; you would, and ought to wish it to be ten times the amount.

The first thing that will strike you on this representation, is the error the Conference has committed, in thus exposing itself, to the just censure of its friends and the reproach of its enemies. How much better would it have been, to have given no accounts at all, rather than such as are so extremely deficient. If they had done this they would only have added one arbitrary act more, to the many already on record, and they would have borne down all opposition: Scripture\*, also might have been

\* II. Kings xii. and 15. Moreover they reckoned not with the Men, into whose hands they delivered the money, to be bestowed on workmen, for they dealt faithfully.

been quoted in their favour, and by maintaining a *divine right*, (the right of giving no account of money to the people,) they would have avoided innumerable difficulties.

As to the appointment of stewards, and we may consider at the same time that of leaders, and the reception of members to the society, surely there never was a more curious contest than that which now exists, between you and the preachers on that subject. You say the laws that give them this power remain in full force. They on the other hand deny it, they say these laws had an amendment in 1795, and another in 1796, and affirm they now have given up every thing.—I cannot here pass over the humorous passage of Dean Swift, where he represents a dispute between two persons, one insisting that the other is dead, but the person declared to be dead, using arguments to prove himself alive, and this dispute is carried on almost as long as the famous methodistical contest, respecting the life or death of the law, that determines these appointments. Be assured my friends this justly obnoxious law “is not dead but sleepeth;” till their is a positive one made, expressing that these appointments shall be determined by the vote of the preachers, along with the leaders, and such other persons as may be thought proper.—My dear friends I doubt you will think me severe, but really I cannot but express my indignation, to see such prevarication, in those characters that I know you wish to honor and esteem.—One general apology for my severity is, that reprehension by an appeal, first to you and afterwards to the world, seems to be the only means, now remaining



remaining whereby we can assert our injured rights, and oppose the unprecedented pretensions of the conference.

It is not my intention to fatigue you with a disquisition of the whole fund of matter, that this fruitful subject affords.—I have slightly touched on a few particulars, but will desert them for more general observations. The most important period in Methodism is, that of the decease of our truly venerable father. At that crisis many of the preachers, as if impatient to seize the power his lengthened days had withheld from them, and without taking the advice of the people, sprang with avidity, into the car of uncontrouled authority : they remembered the vulgar maxim that possession superiudes the law, and with many people of the world thought, whatever they could get possession of was their right, without examining the channel of its descent to them, or the means whereby it had been originally obtained. Thus having procured their *own consent* to dispose of our money, our liberties and our valuable privileges, they seized the reins of government, and without forgetting the whip, many of them began to drive furiously. Tyrants always suppose the whole world was made for them, they have no conception of its being created for any other use, than to be the theatre of their ambition. I sincerely wish that these opinions were confined to the world and worldly men, but if the conduct of many of those that compose the conference were closely examined, it would appear as if they thought themselves the Masters, rather than the Ministers, or servants of the people ; and that the *first* design of Methodism was, to display their talents in the art of government, and the *second* to instruct the poor and needy.

One great objection to Methodism upon its present plan, and under its present laws, is, that the different parts of our system are linked together, so as to form an aggregate mass very capable of being swayed, or directed to any purpose, at the will of a few. As this is capable of being used to good, so also it may be diverted to bad purposes; and it behoves you to look narrowly to that source, from whence your laws, and general plans of government proceed.—My honest friends, endeavour to throw off those fetters with which your minds have been so long shackled: you are not blind, though the conference wish you to be so with respect to their own power. Was ever any system better calculated to lay you in the power of a few individuals, and to make you subservient to the purposes of designing men, if the preachers should become such, and such they most certainly will become, in a very short time, if you do not remove their temptations, and watch carefully over them. Now I intreat you attend diligently, to the few hints I am going to give you, as being descriptive of your present situation, and of the gulph into which you are in the greatest danger of falling, if you do not immediately assert your rights.

You know the preachers have the greatest sway over the people, at least over a great part of them, and the preachers throughout these kingdoms, are ruled by the assistants. The next step is, the assistants are accountable to the assembled conference. Now it is acknowledged on all hands, that a Junto of preachers governs the conference. Of what number this Junto consists I cannot exactly determine, but to use a certain for an uncertain number, we may call it the Methodistical Decemvirate

Decemvirate. A Decemvirate is a government by ten persons. You know the famous London Bull had ten signatures to it, though I think these were not all of them, of the genuine Decemvirate. You my honest friends perhaps will say, you do not see the evil of this, and that it appears to you a very harmless, and useful concatenation of the different orders necessary for church government. But I will give you my further sentiments on this matter. I am fully persuaded that there must be a still higher power, that will in turn govern the Decemvirate, and that is what you have so much to dread; and though I cannot at present inform you who, and what that power will be, there certainly will be such a one in a very little time, if you suffer the preachers to maintain their present plan. If however I may hazard a conjecture in this matter, it is this, that if an under Secretary of State, should attempt to govern the Decemvirate, he cannot fail of success. That I am not wide in my conjecture, I refer you that are acquainted with the affair, to a certain transaction in the last spring. When this one link is superadded as the finishing stroke of the chain in our church government, when this *blessed* top stone is brought home with shouting, to what a disastrous point will poor Methodism have arrived. This will be beginning in the spirit, and ending in the flesh with a witness. My friends, use your judgment, see your situation before it is too late, and assert your rights. If the junior preachers saw their true interests, and considered how much they were enslaved by the Decemvirate, they would join heartily with the people in the business of a reform, and would throw off that yoke that has so long oppressed them. Be assured if the conference continue as at present, to choose its

own



own members, and make its own laws, its ruin is inevitable, and nothing can save it. If they maintain these points, the cause of their declension is established, and the effect will swiftly follow. It is evident to every person that gives himself the trouble of proper reflection, that it contains within itself the latent seeds, of its own destruction; and we may say of the conference, as has been said of the human frame.

“ The young disease that must subdue at length,

“ Grows with its growth, and strengthens with its strength.”

I next proceed to remark some of those arguments the conference makes use of, to support its power. And here I cannot but lament with you, that they who wish to support the most sacred of all characters, should ever depart from that frankness, and ingenuousness, that are its principal ornaments, and adopt artifice and policy, quite unworthy of the great cause, in which they are engaged. I mention as the first of the many instances of this, the attempting to raise up to our imagination our late venerable father, and show our ingratitude, as they call it to him, and appeal to his sentiments as to the word of truth. There is a certain point to which we may arrive in the praise of any mortal, and beyond which we cannot go, without our praises being changed into fulsome adulation, and becoming the severest of all censures.—Mr. Wesley justly deserves the esteem of you and of all men. We are willing to allow him to stand among the first of mortals, but it is really insulting his memory, to speak of him in that unqualified manner, in which some have done.

Another argument that I would notice, is the appealing



ing to the prosperity of Methodism, and inferring from hence, that because the divine blessing hath attended us, therefore all innovations would be sinful.

This, though under a different colour, is reviving the stale doctrine of *divine rights*, that has served the purposes of despots in all ages, and has assumed as many forms as Proteus, in their service. This argument however, like most other bad ones, lies under the disadvantage of proving too much, for by this way of reasoning you may prove that the monastic institutions were right. According to Mosheim, a revival of real genuine religion, though encumbered with enthusiasm and mysticism attended the establishment of many of these orders, and I doubt not but the zealots of those days, proved the superiority of their own orders, and each vindicated their peculiar follies, by pure Methodistical arguments.

The next stratagem that I shall notice that is used by the conference to support their power, is, they stigmatize their opponents as enemies of religion, and of the work of God. They charge them in the most solemn manner of being the cause of a series of evils, of the first magnitude. It is no new thing my friends, for the aggressors in quarrel, by a proper dexterity and ingenious contrivance to become the accusers. By a little address, they contrive to establish their own characters at the expence of their neighbours, and charge upon others those faults that are really their own.—So much sophistry will despotism make use of, when it apprehends itself in danger, that it is almost impossible to lay hold of it. When beat out of one retreat, it will immediately take refuge in another; it will elude the most diligent

purfuit, and repel every attack, by the never failing weapons of calumny and reproach.

The conference need not blame the people as being the caufe of the prefent difputes, the origin of thefe contentions is to be found among themfelves. It is not at all probable, that the people fhould ever reft fatisfied with the prefent difpofal of power, and it is ftrange that the conference fhould not have forefeen this. They certainly need only blame themfelves and their own laws, they may reft affured, that if the whole prefent race of Methodifts were extinct, and a new one to arife under the fame laws, and fimilar evils, the preachers would be oppreffors, and the people would complain. There is one general plan of defence adopted by all descriptions of perfons in power, whenever they fuffer an attack upon their prerogative from mankind; they calumniate us with wifhing to adopt visionary theoretical plans, fuch as they fay are impoffible in the prefent ftate of fociety. This old argument has been preffed into the fervice of arbitrary government in all ages. We fay the vote of the people, or rather their representatives fhould ftand as the ultimate decifion, to be had recourfe to, when the ufual means of debate and difcuffion prove infufficient: but we fay this would very feldom occur.—The preachers however miftate this cafe, and represent it as if a vote muft always be ufed, and on the moft trifling occafions, caufing as they fay an endlefs perplexity. It is very eafy for perfons to anfwer any argument, if they be allowed to ftate it their own way, and draw from it their own confequences and conclufions. I am forry fo many inftances of unfair representations fhould occur, and that I fhould be under the  
neceffity

necessity of elucidating these to you. Do the conference suppose there are no calm spectators of their conduct, that will watch all their actions, investigate their various arguments, and reason fairly and properly on them. And do they not see that such an investigation will not turn out highly to their honour? Or do they suppose, that because they wish not to examine their own errors, that others will be equally negligent in these enquiries? Thus natural history, or perhaps fable informs us, of some simple birds that shut their eyes to avoid their enemies, and wisely suppose with the conference, that because they do not choose to see themselves, they are not observed by others.

No persons unacquainted with our affairs, would give credit to the extraordinary conduct of *some* of the preachers, and the countenance our laws give, to their proceedings. They usually commence their career, with a display of a considerable proportion, of that peculiar qualification, that Shakespeare stiles the *insolence of office*, and their future conduct is such, as might be expected from these *happy* beginnings. Mr. Locke observes young gentlemen, think they have been in vain taught to fence, if they never are really engaged in that kind of combat, and adds, this idea is the cause of many duels. Undue power in the hands of weak men, has precisely the same effect, and *too many* of our assistants think, they do not properly fill that office, till they have showed their dexterity, in the coercion of the people, and have received the applause of their brethren on that account. —But when these persons exult, in the adroitness of their conduct, and the advantages they suppose they have obtained, they should take into the account the remote and ultimate consequences of it. They have  
often



often carried their favourite measures, against the inclinations and remonstrances of the societies, and have obtained no visible advantage to counterbalance the loss they have sustained, in the esteem and affections of the people: but have created to themselves and to their successors a thousand enemies.—The conference is now groaning beneath the weight of that just resentment, and indignation, (I hope I may not add and retaliation,) that is the natural consequence of the conduct of *many* of the preachers for many years. These (to use a scriptural phrase,) have been long casting their bread upon the waters, and lo! it all appears again to their inexpressible sorrow.—They have been without design preparing materials which are likely to burst upon them with irresistible force. May this explosion have its salutary consequences on themselves, and on the people: may it terminate, in the establishment of such laws and such general plans of government, as will support and encourage the one, and not be oppressive to the other.

There is with individuals with families and with societies, the states of nonage, and maturity, each of which requires its different treatment. Were a parent to persevere in the same conduct towards his children when arrived at the age of maturity, that he used in their infancy, he need not be surprized if resistance and disobedience were the consequence.—If the conference be determined to pursue the same conduct, that Mr Wesley, and the original preachers did at the establishment, of the infant societies, they are proceeding upon a similar error. They are absurdly expecting from the people that obedience they will certainly, in the end be determined not to pay. Difficult in all cases



is the renunciation of power, even parents often repine at the loss of that obedience, that proper consideration will teach them, they have no right to expect. The conference is precisely in the same situation, and now lament the loss of that power, they ought by no means to accept of, even if tendered to them by the people.— They should shew to mankind that they have not the name only, but enter deeply into the spirit of their office, and make a generous renunciation of that reproachful power, they know is so liable to be abused. They should strengthen the faith of this generation that hath its attention uncommonly directed to them, by exhibiting to the world this solitary instance of divine grace; and teach mankind that though a *voluntary renunciation of power* is too great for any human effort, yet with God all things are possible. They should immediately restore to the people their injured rights, and hold out to them an example of liberality, and display that high character that their peculiar situations and high professions give us reason to expect. They should make the compliment of a *free gift* of those privileges, that the people will shortly seize as their right, and for which the conference will not then be entitled to their thanks.

Now my friends I have as briefly as possible, attempted to give you a true statement of the present grievances, and hope you will endeavour to reason fairly upon it.—Good and sincere men, often draw contrary conclusions from the very same premises, according to the medium through which they are viewed. Some for instance think our present mode of government absolutely necessary for the support of our religious societies,  
and

and others on the contrary are as firmly persuaded it will prove the certain cause of their destruction.—My friends it is requisite in all cases when we would form a just judgment that we should stand in that situation, that leaves the mind free from prejudice, that we may be at liberty to reason with calmness and impartiality.—In natural vision we may be too near the object, or too distant to see distinctly; the same may be said of our reasoning faculties, the preachers are too near the object in dispute, to reason properly upon it, they are bewildered in the dazzling splendor of their own power, and their judgment in this case cannot be a rule for you. To carry on the simile many of the people on the contrary are too distant, and are incapable from their deficiency of information, to form a proper judgment.—The preachers say a majority of the people are in favour of the present laws. But were they to have the voice of all the leaders and stewards that have been any length of time in those offices (and these I affirm are generally speaking the persons that have a competent knowledge of our affairs,) I am of opinion they would be decidedly in favour of a reform. Yet in this case a difference of sentiment would appear, though agreed as to the main object, they would differ in their conduct; some would be willing to resign their privileges though acknowledged to be necessary *for the sake of peace*, others would insist on a reform at all events, and many would act between these extremes.

Tis really a great pity the preachers should think so lightly, of forfeiting the esteem and affections of the people, and that they should barter these, for a mistaken paltry prerogative. A prerogative which if preserved would prove to them and to you the same  
curse,

curse, that it hath been to the church in all preceeding ages, and it is a duty quite incumbent on you to prevent it: to effect which your way is sufficiently plain. —At the same time that I am explaining this to you, I was going to caution you against divisions, but this I know I need not do as it relates to you. You of yourselves will make none; the conference know this, they defy all divisions, among the people when not assisted by some leading preacher, they make declarations as if they mean the people, when in reality they mean themselves. When in private they talk of making divisions, they do it with the same assurance of success, that a shepherd does when he speaks of dividing his flocks. — I therefore seriously advise you, to take these matters into consideration, watch over the preachers in love, and insist on such a share, in the disposal of your affairs, as shall prevent the undue balance of power in the hands of a few of the leading preachers. I advise you to take into your own hands the direction of all money matters, let all these be *determined* in your meetings, the preachers being present and voting as one of you, but no further. — In this manner elect your own stewards, receive all your usual collections that belong to the conference, and remit them by your own delegates: not as supposing your preachers unworthy of the trust, but as being your only and proper means, of insuring your delegates a proper reception at the district meetings, or at the conference. Be determined by your delegates to have the forming of your own laws, and a direction of the expenditure of your money. — If you are steadfast in this, I believe your affairs will soon wear, a more pleasing and a very different aspect. I know you do,

or



or would esteem the preachers, if they would let you. You would not despise the low extraction of some of them: you would bear with all their weakneses and infirmities, if their conduct would leave your affections at liberty to flow in their natural channel. They might then adopt the scriptural hyperbole, and bear you record that you would pull out your eyes to serve them, you would always shew your firm attachment to them and their cause; and your conduct would declare better than your words, "how beautiful are the feet of them that publish the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." So sacred at all times to a pious soul, is the name of a godly minister.

I am Dear Friends,

Yours respectfully,

ROBERT HALL.





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